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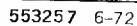
VIETNAM: Situation report. (Page 1)



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VIETNAM: North Vietnamese politburo member Le Duc Tho has returned to Hanoi after stopovers in Moscow and Peking.

Tho, who had been in Paris since his secret talks in early May with Dr. Kissinger, left France on 10 June to attend an official state function in Bulgaria. His one-day layover in Moscow has so far been mentioned only in a brief North Vietnamese news agency dispatch on 17 June, suggesting that he had been welcomed and seen off at the airport by a relatively low-ranking Soviet delegation. Peking Radio, which announced Tho's departure for Hanoi yesterday, reported that during his short stay in China, Tho had been feted at a banquet "amid a warm atmosphere of friendship" and had held a "very cordial conversation" with Premier Chou En-lai.

Tho's return comes just after Soviet President Podgorny completed his visit to North Vietnam. Podgorny told reporters in Calcutta yesterday, where he touched down en route back to Moscow, that his talks with North Vietnamese leaders had gone "as we desired," that the peace talks in Paris would be resumed soon, and that the USSR would do everything possible to bring about a de-escalation of the Vietnam conflict. Both Soviet and North Vietnamese news media continue to maintain silence on Podgorny's visit.

* * * *

Light Communist shellings and ground probes occurred in several areas of South Vietnam during the weekend, but no major new fighting was reported. In the far north, four battalions of South Vietnamese Marines have launched another operation into enemy-held territory north of the Quang Tri - Thua Thien provincial border. The marines so far have encountered little resistance.

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(In the provinces around Saigon, pressure has eased somewhat, but the government relief column trying to reach An Loc is still stalled south of the town on Route 13. New skirmishing was reported east of Saigon in Phuoc Tuy Province. Fighting is continuing in the upper Mekong Delta region in the Kien Tuong Province - Cambodian border area, but the intensity has diminished and much of the activity apparently stems from government operations on the Cambodian side of the border. [REDACTED]

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BURMA-USSR: Burma's Prime Minister Ne Win has decided to approach the Soviet Union for military equipment.



Ne Win reportedly plans to visit the Soviet Union in a few weeks. The Burmese trade minister is already in Moscow and while he is said to be negotiating a commodity aid loan, he also could have initiated the military equipment negotiations. From the USSR, the trade minister will go on to Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, and Romania. He may brief Ne Win in Switzerland before the prime minister proceeds to Moscow.

Burma is primarily interested in automatic weapons and ammunition, mortars, and artillery shells. Ne Win may also ask for modern aircraft to replace the obsolescent planes now in use. Burma's dire financial situation and shortage of foreign exchange presumably will necessitate a generous credit or concessional sales arrangement.

Burma's military equipment previously has come mainly from the UK and, more recently, from the US. A modest procurement program from the US dating from 1958 was largely completed in 1971. Burma's needs for re-equipment and replacement remain substantial, however. About half of the government's military effort is devoted to counterinsurgency, especially in the northeast where Communist rebels on the China border receive some arms from Peking.

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In keeping with Burmese non-alignment, the government may calculate that arms purchases from Communist nations will balance previous procurement from the West. More important, however, may be Ne Win's idea of going to Eastern Europe and Moscow in the hope of getting both generous purchase terms and leverage with the Chinese.

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